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**NARRATIVE LEAD**

**HARARE, ZIMBABWE-** Rudaviro Mbango (20) (CQ_Source sheet) works as a house cleaner in Harare, she narrates how she failed to sit for her final ordinary level examinations because her parents could not afford the required school fees and let alone, the examination fee.

“l feel robbed of a chance to better my life and that of my siblings and parents,” she says.

The memory of her rural life remains the strongest. Her primary education, which was declared free for all after independence was also marred with difficulties.

“After l had finished grade seven, l had to spend the whole year at home, l could not proceed to form one, my parents could not afford to pay an accumulated fee of $90 for me to get my grade seven results,” says a teary Mbango. (CQ)

**NEWS VALUE**

Zimbabwe’s education sector has suffered some setbacks over the years including, brain drain, poor infrastructure and low education standards. As Zimbabwean elections set for 30 July 2018 draw closer, various political parties have pledged to transform the education sector.

## CONTEXT, BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND STATISTICS

According to a report by the ministry of education and UNESCO, at Independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited a dual education system characterised by inequities within the education system. The white minority were offered better education standards as compared to the black majority.

After Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, the report further states that measures were taken by the Zimbabwean government to redress the discriminatory practices of the colonial rule, Zimbabwe government adopted the policy of education as a basic human right and committed itself to universal and equal educational opportunity for all (CQ_LINK)

Now 38 years after Zimbabwe attained independence, the education sector is one of the top discussed issues. As Zimbabwe heads for election in 2018, many are questioning what various political parties are offering with regards to the education sector.

## LOCAL VIEWPOINTS

Elton Steers Mangoma CQ_Source sheet) is one of the presidential candidates for the 2018 elections under the Coalition of Democrats (CODE) alliance. He emphasises the need for every Zimbabwean to be educated and provided a chance that Mbango (CQ)did not get.

"Those who can pay must pay. But those who can't pay their children will go to school, on top of that we want all girl children to be able to attend school until they reach ordinary level. So whether they pass or they fail, it does not matter, they must be going to school and learning something, that way we will also be not only teaching them some life skills but we will also have delayed marriages and early motherhood," he says

Noah Manyika (CQ_Source sheet) a presidential candidate representing the Build Zimbabwe Alliance (LINK) political party says the collapse of the education sector in Zimbabwe is all because of a deteriorating economy.

"We also face the additional problems of a system that produces students in mass. It's very important for the education system to train people for the jobs that are there but also to produce people that create those jobs," he says.

He adds that the education sector is facing too many problems like the lack of textbooks and disgruntled teachers who are not paid adequately, “the teaching job is not regarded as an attractive job,” he says.

For Manyika, (CQ) if poverty is not dealt with, education quality and standards in Zimbabwe will continue to crumble.

“People have fallen in love with STEM, emphasising sciences and engineering and these things should not be treated in isolation, we have to fix the economy at first and that will have an impact on the education sector,” he says.

“It’s important for us to have a flourishing private sector and that determines the quality of education that we have. Initially there was a wonderful emphasis on our education after independence, but soon thereafter, things went south because of the dysfunctional rule of Zanu Pf impacted some of these services and sectors like education,” he says.

Douglas Mwonzora CQ_Source sheet) the secretary general for Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-t) (LINK) which is a key member of the MDC alliance says they want to improve the education sector which they believe is currently is shambles.

“First we want education to be accessible to all Zimbabweans irrespective of class, to that end we are going to pursue a policy where early education from ECD (Early Childhood Development) to grade seven will be free, it will be at the cost of the state and thereafter the parents will meet the education cost from form one to form 6 after that the state takes over again with the provision of loans and grants to tertiary students. This is re-introducing what was there until the early nineties at University of Zimbabwe and other colleges,” he says.

Mwonzora (CQ) says practical subject learning has not been emphasised in Zimbabwe.

The alliance plans to fund the education sector through five sources namely, foreign direct investment, private public partnerships, taxes, overseas assistance and domestic savings and pensions.

He says from these funding sources they will be able to sponsor various programmes, “so funding in our view is not going to be a problem, it hasn’t been a problem in the education sector it’s the misallocation of resources…a lot of resources are wasted in bureaucratic overheads, the funding of the ministry officials at the expense of education,” he says.

Joram Gumbo (CQ_Source sheet) the secretary for education within the Zanu Pf politburo says their aim as a party is to provide education that is

practical and that targets development with an aim of revamping industries and the economy.

“We want graduates who are not only job seekers but also job creators, we want education which is like innovation, we are known for high literacy rate but we are just producing graduates who are selling airtime and who can’t do anything to improve the economy,” he says.

He adds that the education sector should have more students conducting research.

“We want to make sure that many students attain scholarships, we now had the presidential scholarship being popular, but we want such things within the country…providing bursaries and scholarships so that our students get education and we don’t overburden the parent,” he says.

**EXPERTS/Government**

Paul Mavhima CQ_Source sheet) the minister of primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe says although the education sector has faced some challenges, some gains have also been appreciated since the new government led by Emmerson Mnangagwa (CQ) came into power.

“There have been quite a number of things that we have done, the first was the ground breaking on 17 new schools that have been constructed throughout the country with some loan financing the OPEC (Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) fund for international development. The schools are at different stages of completion,” he says.

Mavhima (CQ) says the have spent 3.5 million in purchasing teaching and learning material for the new curriculum which has been distributed to schools.

“We are in the second phase, where we are going to spend about 4 million for additional teaching and learning materials, we have made sure that treasury allocates and disperses money for the refurbishment of the schools which were affected by storms and other disasters and a total of about 2 and half million has already been spent on schools so the schools have already been refurbished,” he says.

Mavhima (CQ) adds that they have taken a stance to promote income generation in schools and provide lessons on practical projects.

But the education sector still has a lot of challenges.

“We have a deficit of 2000 schools, our schools are in short supply, other infrastructure like labs are in short supply. We have little resources for public sector investment programme, the rate at which we have been

building in schools is very low, but we are thinking in terms of starting a programme for public private partnerships or joint venture where we motivate investors to come in and they give us funding and we build and then we pay over a long period of time," says Mavhima. (CQ)

"The prospects that we are looking at are economic prospects and since the coming in of the new dispensation there have been quite an activity and a lot of investors have committed to revive mines, and other sectors," he says.

**LANGUAGE**: Linda Mujuru translated some interviews from Shona to English.